



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Parliamentary Elections in Tajikistan**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council,  
February 10, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Tajikistan's upcoming Parliamentary elections will be a very important milestone for evaluating the progress of democratic development in Central Asia. We are hopeful this will prove to be a successful opportunity for Tajikistan to demonstrate its commitment to democratic processes.

The United States commends Tajikistan for taking a number of positive steps to promote an outcome that is consistent with President Rakhmonov's public call for elections that are free and fair. Such measures include facilitating the presence of ODIHR and other foreign observers, it includes ensuring adequate training of election officials at the district and precinct levels, and it consists of establishing a commission to review candidates' complaints.

We remain concerned, however, by reports of official harassment of independent media, including the recent suspension of another independent Tajik language newspaper, and by the authorities' abuse of the law to disqualify potential opposition candidates.

Such actions are clearly inconsistent with international democratic standards and they undermine Tajikistan's stated determination to hold elections that are free and fair.

The United States believes strongly that an electoral atmosphere that encourages full participation by candidates and voters strengthens peace and stability, rather than undermines it.

We stand ready to assist Tajikistan in the full implementation of its OSCE commitments with respect to Parliamentary elections, and look forward to ODIHR's assessment of the elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.